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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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10/523,803

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EXAMINER

BURKHART, ELIZABETH A

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

1792

MAIL DATE

DELIVERY MODE

12/12/2008

PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary	Application No. 10/523,803	Applicant(s) SUZUKI ET AL.	
	Examiner Elizabeth Burkhart	Art Unit 1792	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 16 September 2008.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-17 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-7 and 9-17 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☒ Claim(s) 8 is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 09 February 2005 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☒ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

1. Claims 1-17 are pending in the application. Amended claims 2 and 15 have been noted. The amendment filed 9/16/2008 has been entered and carefully considered.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

2. Claims 1, 2, 7, 9, 12, 13, 16, and 17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sakamoto et al (US 2002/0001788).

Sakamoto teaches a thermal processing method comprising the steps of: holding a plurality of substrates in a wafer boat, conveying the wafer boat into the reaction chamber, heating a plurality of zones by means of a plurality of heating units, and forming thin films on a surface of the substrates by introducing a process gas into said reaction chamber. The thermal processing method further comprises: depositing a thin film on a plurality of test wafers (1st substrates) located in each zone of the chamber, measuring the thickness of the deposited layer in each zone, setting the temperature in each zone based on the thickness of films deposited, depositing the thin film on a plurality of other test wafers (2nd substrates) using the set temperatures in the zones, measuring the thickness of the deposited films on the second set of test wafers, comparing the thickness with a predetermined thickness range, correcting the temperature of each zone based on the measured thickness of the deposited films, and

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depositing a thin film on a plurality of production substrates to form the finished products having a desired uniform film thickness (Fig. 1, [0056]-[0062], [0073]-[0078]).

Sakamoto does not explicitly disclose that thin films are deposited on the surface of the first test wafers by means of less consumption of the process gas than on the surfaces of the production substrates or that thin films are deposited on the surface of the second test wafers by means of more consumption of the process gas than on the surfaces of the first test wafers. However, since Sakamoto teaches an optimization of the temperature of the heaters to reach a desired thickness of deposited films, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to deposit a film below the desired target thickness on the first test wafers, adjust the temperature of the heaters accordingly, and deposit a thicker film on the second test wafers at the corrected temperature to reach the desired thickness of the film, wherein the deposition on the first test wafers would consume less process gas than the deposition of the second test wafers since the film deposited onto the first test wafers is thinner.

Regarding Claim 7, Sakamoto discloses that the heat treatment process may include thermal oxidation or CVD processes [0004].

Regarding Claim 9, Sakamoto teaches placing one test wafer in each zone (5 zones) of the chamber, however, since the wafer boat may hold for example 150 wafers, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to run a full batch (fully arranged in holding region) of test wafers if desired to more accurately achieve film uniformity throughout all portions of the wafer boat.

Regarding Claims 12, 13, 16, and 17, Sakamoto teaches an apparatus for carrying out the thermal processing method discussed above including a temperature setting part, a temperature correcting part, a temperature setting program, and a temperature correcting program (Fig. 1, [0066]-[0078]).

Thus, claims 1, 2, 7, 9, 12, 13, 16, and 17 would have been obvious within the meaning of 35 USC 103 over the teachings of Sakamoto.

3. Claims 3 and 4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sakamoto as applied above in view of Yoo (US 2003/0162372).

Sakamoto teaches that an oxide film may be deposited by wet oxidation using H₂ and O₂ ([0144], [0148]), but does not teach activating the process gas to generate active species and forming oxide films by means of said active species.

Yoo teaches a method of forming an oxide film by wet oxidation using H₂ and O₂, wherein oxygen radicals are produced to enhance the oxidation rate (Abstract, [0008], [0041]).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention by applicant to generate active species such as the oxygen radicals suggested by Yoo in the wet oxidation process of Sakamoto in order to enhance the oxidation rate.

Thus, claims 3 and 4 would have been obvious within the meaning of 35 USC 103 over the combined teachings of Sakamoto and Yoo.

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4. Claim 5 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sakamoto in view of Yoo as applied above and further in view of Applicant's Admitted Prior Art (Spec. p. 2, lines 19-26).

Sakamoto and Yoo do not teach that the first substrates are substrates on which oxide films having an average thickness of 50 nm or more have been formed in advance.

Applicant's Admitted Prior Art states that it was known in the art to use silicon oxide dummy wafers when adjusting the temperature set values of respective heaters to make the thickness of a deposited silicon oxide film uniform between wafers in a vertical furnace and cites JP-A-2001-77041 as an example of such an adjusting operation.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention by applicant to use a first substrate having an oxide film deposited thereon as suggested by Applicant's Admitted Prior Art as the first test wafers in the process of Sakamoto since silicon oxide dummy wafers were suitable for a temperature adjusting operation such as the adjusting operation of Sakamoto. Also, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to use a silicon oxide dummy wafer having an oxide layer of any desired thickness, including values in the claimed range, especially absent evidence showing a criticality for using oxide thicknesses in the claimed range.

Thus, claim 5 would have been obvious within the meaning of 35 USC 103 over the combined teachings of Sakamoto, Yoo, and Applicant's Admitted Prior Art.

5. Claim 6 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sakamoto in view of Yoo as applied above and further in view of Watanabe et al ('602).

Sakamoto and Yoo do not teach that the second substrates are bare silicon wafers.

Watanabe teaches that dummy wafers used in a vertical furnace reactor may be silicon wafers (Fig. 3, Col. 9, lines 37-50).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention by applicant to use silicon wafers as suggested by Watanabe as the test wafers (dummy wafers) in Sakamoto since silicon wafers would have been suitable as dummy wafers in vertical furnace reactors.

Thus, claim 6 would have been obvious within the meaning of 35 USC 103 over the combined teachings of Sakamoto, Yoo, and Watanabe.

6. Claims 10, 11, 14, and 15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sakamoto as applied above in view of Jun et al ('094).

Sakamoto does not teach arranging the production substrates at a portion on an upstream side of a flow of process gas in the holding region to be processed in the substrate holder and arranging the first substrates at a residual portion in the holding region.

Jun teaches a method of controlling the thickness of a deposited layer by loading monitoring wafers into a the substrate holder with production wafers, measuring the thickness of the film deposited on the monitoring wafers, and adjusting the temperature for each zone of the furnace in order to form a target thickness on the production substrates. Jun teaches that the monitoring wafers may be loaded into different zones of the furnace (which would include a residual portion) and production wafers are

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loaded with the monitoring wafers (including portions on an upstream side of a flow of process gas) (Figs. 1, 4A, 4B, 5, Col. 2, lines 40-60, Col. 3, line 40-Col. 4, line 20).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention by applicant to arrange production wafers with the test wafers of Sakamoto, wherein the production wafers are arranged at a portion of the holding region on an upstream side of a flow of process gas and the test wafers are arranged in a residual region of the holding region as suggested by Jun in order to increase process productivity and reduce process cost (Jun, Col. 3, lines 50-55).

Regarding Claim 11, Sakamoto teaches that the flow rate of the process gas and time of thermal process are common in the corrected temperature step and the final step of forming a film on a production substrate since the only parameter that is changed is the temperature of the zones [0073]-[0078].

Regarding Claim 14, Jun discloses an apparatus for arranging the substrates as discussed above and it would have been obvious that Jun discloses a substrate conveying unit that conveys a substrate onto the substrate holder since monitoring wafers are placed in specific portions of the wafer boat and production wafers fill the remaining portions.

Regarding Claim 15, Sakamoto teaches loading a specific number of substrates, such as 150 substrates [0058], onto a wafer boat and Jun teaches loading a specific number of monitoring wafers with production wafers onto a wafer boat, thus it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill to use a part that judges the number of

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production substrates since the specific number of production substrates loaded in the wafer boat is known in both processes.

Thus, claims 10, 11, 14, and 15 would have been obvious within the meaning of 35 USC 103 over the combined teachings of Sakamoto and Jun.

Allowable Subject Matter

7. Claim 8 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

The following is a statement of reasons for the indication of allowable subject matter: The prior art does not teach or suggest using first substrates having surfaces on which patterns have not been formed and second substrates having surfaces on which patterns have been formed in a temperature adjustment operation to control the thickness of a deposited film on a plurality of production substrates (third substrates).

Response to Arguments

8. Applicant's arguments filed 9/16/2008 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Applicant argues that Sakamoto does not recognize or suggest Applicants' underlining reasons for their particular method steps. In particular, Sakamoto does not teach or suggest a solution to the problem of the loading effect. The examiner agrees that Sakamoto does not mention the loading effect problem. However, Applicant states that by cancelling the loading effect problem, the processing results in films of high uniformity, irrespective of any given wafer's position or zone within the processing chamber (Arguments, bottom p. 13). Sakamoto teaches that the thickness

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and quality of the film deviates from set values when the temperature of the wafer differs from the set wafer temperature. This problem is solved by incorporating the process steps of Sakamoto such that a uniform film may be obtained irrespective of any given wafer's position [0008]-[0010]. While Sakamoto does not mention the loading effect problem specifically, Sakamoto does teach or suggest all of the limitations of the claim and solves the same problem as the present invention of depositing uniform films irrespective of any given wafer's position within the chamber.

9. **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL.** Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Elizabeth Burkhart whose telephone number is (571)272-6647. The examiner can normally be reached on M-Th 7-5:30.

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If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Timothy Meeks can be reached on 571-272-1423. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Elizabeth Burkhart/
Examiner, Art Unit 1792

/Timothy H Meeks/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 1792